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Mapping Public Relations in Europe: Writing National Histories against the US Paradigm

Una cartografía europea para las relaciones públicas: la historia como respuesta al paradigma doctrinal norteamericano

Recibido: 30 de septiembre de 2011

Aceptado: 7 de diciembre de 2011

ABSTRACT: The purpose of this paper is to recall the early historical development of public relations (PR) in five European countries so as to trace the emergence of the study and teaching of PR as a profession in Europe as compared to the United States. In light of recent accounts of the history of PR, the main goal of this study is to contribute to a comparative, international historical narrative by providing an overview of the main events that shaped the early stages of the profession in the United Kingdom, Italy, France, Germany and Spain.

Key words: Public relations, European public relations, European history of public relations.

Resumen: El presente trabajo pretende recuperar el inicio de la trayectoria histórica de las relaciones públicas (RP) en cinco países europeos. Se ofrece así una cartografía para el estudio y la enseñanza de los comienzos de la profesión en Europa que contrarresta el predominio de la literatura americana. En la línea de investigaciones recientes, el objetivo de este artículo es contribuir al establecimiento de una historia internacional comparada de las RP, en este caso, europea. Para ello, se presenta un recorrido por los principales acontecimientos que marcaron los inicios de la profesión en Gran Bretaña, Italia, Francia, Alemania y España.

Palabras clave: relaciones públicas, relaciones públicas europeas, historia europea de relaciones públicas.

1. Introduction

Recent academic research concerning public relations (PR) has involved a comparative, international account of the field and yielded a growing body of knowledge of global PR¹. Not only does the history of PR in Europe offer scholars an enabling opportunity to call into question the overwhelming prevalence of US-produced research literature, as part of the sector's evolving professional status; it may also afford researchers the opportunity to ground knowledge of the kind of contexts that foster the emergence of PR as a professional activity. Thus, the history of PR may shed new light on the true nature of a sector that is subject to the political, sociocultural and economic factors at play in the field in which it operates².

To this end, an overview of the main milestones in the development of PR in the UK, Italy, France, Germany and Spain is provided in this paper; the first four countries are of particular interest because they were home to pioneering figures in the field across Europe and in related international movements; and Spain is of similar significance due to the specific political context in which PR emerged. This overview is not intended to be exhaustive; the objective is to outline the origins and circumstances of PR in five key countries shaped by markedly different historical contexts. These synopses reflect the different ways in which PR (commonly regarded as an emblematically American –that is, US– activity) developed in different places. A brief history of PR for each of the countries listed above may enable a clearer conclusion regarding whether or not there is a common European trend in the history of PR, and describe the comparative contexts of the development of PR that may, in turn, lead to the definition of the factors that condition the emergence of PR as a profession.

Until very recently, the prevalence of US-based and published monograph studies and research articles on the history of PR has required scholars to read such works as standard, and has framed PR as a profession from a similarly

¹ Cfr. SRIRAMESH, Krishnamurthy & VERČIČ, Dejan (edit.), *The Global Public Relations Handbook. Theory, Research, and Practice*, Routledge, New York, 2009, Expanded and Revised Edition, p. xxxi, preface; MILLER, Karen, "US public relations history: knowledge and limitations", in ROLOFF, M. E. (edit.), *Communication Yearbook 23*, Sage, Thousand Oaks, 2000, pp. 381-420; L'ETANG, Jacquie, "Writing PR history: issues, methods and politics", *Journal of Communication Management*, vol. 12, n° 4, 2008, pp. 319-335; BINI, Elisabetta, FASCE, Ferdinando & MUZI FALCONI, Toni, "The origins and early developments of public relations in post-war Italy, 1945-1960", *Journal of Communication Management*, vol. 15, n° 3, 2011, pp. 210-222.

² L'ETANG, Jacquie, "Writing PR history...", 2008, p. 326; cfr. SRIRAMESH, Krishnamurthy and VERČIČ, Dejan (edit.), *op. cit.*, p. xxxi, preface.

American perspective. Hence, as Vasquez and Taylor averred, the historical narrative has been biased by this ethnocentric focus; in their 2001 study, these scholars identified a range of activities in a number of countries that may be described as PR-precedent practices³. However, such activities have been eclipsed within an historical record drafted primarily in terms of a US-American timeline.

The lack of systematic studies of other countries and contexts may account for the predominance of US-based research in this regard; and the scarcity of such research in Europe may be due in part to the American origin and ownership of the term “public relations”. Because of the US background that frames the field, precedent phenomena and practices in other countries that were described in different terms have been overlooked. Strategic communication has been formulated in a variety of ways, leading to a fragmentary account of social communication as a whole⁴. However, this paper discloses how a renewed interest in the history of PR has arisen in European countries over the last twenty years, to compensate in part for the relative lack of historical study in this regard.

2. The historiography of PR in Europe

The first assertion of the importance of historiography in this field came under the striking title *Auf der Suche nach Identität* (translation: “In search of an identity: the history of PR as the cornerstone of a theoretical framework”)⁵, Peter Szyszka’s study of the significance of an historical approach to an understanding of PR in Europe. For Szyszka, the view that the history of PR is merely a window on the past is mistaken⁶. The purpose of the historical approach is to provide a clearer account of how PR as such emerged. This process of development discloses a range of responses to questions relating to the nature and structure of PR.

³ VASQUEZ, Gabriel M., TAYLOR, Maureen, “Public Relations: An Emerging Social Science Enters the New Millennium”, *Communication Yearbook* 24, International Communication Association, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, 2001, p. 321.

⁴ PIZARROSO QUINTERO, Alejandro, “Las fronteras de la comunicación estratégica (I). Planteamientos clásicos: propaganda y retórica”, in PÉREZ GONZÁLEZ, Rafael Alberto (edit.), *Estrategias de comunicación*, Ariel Comunicación, Barcelona, 2001, pp. 485-486.

⁵ Cfr. SZYSZKA, Peter (edit.), *Auf der Suche nach Identität: Public Relations Geschichte als Theoriebaustein*, Vistas Verlag GmbH, Berlin, 1997.

⁶ Cfr. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

In a published article on the cultural differences that shaped the development of PR practices in different places since the emergence of the profession as such, Karl Nessmann takes a similar view as regards the crisis of identity that has marked PR in Europe⁷. The article reflects Nessmann's interest in highlighting the historical conditions specific to PR in Europe. He argues that the initial practice of PR in the US was seen as a defensive response to the criticism of big business articulated in investigative journalism at the turn of the twentieth century. However, during the same time period, the emerging function of PR in Germany and Austria was primarily informative; it was not a defensive strategy. Nessmann presents evidence to show that specifically European –as opposed to US– roots may be traced in the history of PR. He came up against two obstacles in his endeavor to draft such a history: first, the lack of systematic research in the field, and the prevalence of US-centered studies in the established academic tradition. Both of these difficulties may be attributed to the failure to offer a clear definition of the study of PR, a situation which has lasted down to the present day.

A new project was established in this context in the late 1990s: the European Public Relations Body of Knowledge (EBOK) was set up in 1998 under the auspices of the European Association for Public Relations Education and Research, which is closely linked to the *Centre Européen des Relations Publiques* (CERP E & R)⁸. There was a precedent for this project in 1987, when the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) established the Public Relations Body of Knowledge Task Force, the purpose of which was to compile a bibliography of research studies concerning PR throughout the world. Despite this apparently global goal, the list of 800 research entries, complete with content-summaries, did not contain a single reference to a European scholar or article⁹. The theoretical predominance of the US in the field prompted a debate in 1998 regarding the true origin of the concept of PR –that is, whether PR is a wholly Anglo-American phenomenon, or if there may be a European dimension to such practices outside the US. At the turn of the twenty-first century, scholars in Europe renamed the study cited above, referring to it thereafter as the “North American Body of North American Public Relations”

⁷ Cfr. NESSMANN, Karl, “The origins and development of public relations in Germany and Austria”, in MOSS, Danny, VERČIČ, Dejan, WARNABY, Gary, *Perspectives on Public Relations Research*, Routledge, London, 2000, pp. 211-225.

⁸ In January, 2001, the Association's name changed to: *European Public Relations Education and Research Association* (EUPRERA).

⁹ Cfr. PRSA TASK FORCE, “Public Relations Body of Knowledge Task Force Report”, *Public Relations Review*, Vol. 14, n° 1, Spring 1988, pp. 3-40.

in an attempt to register the failure to taken European texts into account¹⁰. The EBOK project was inspired by the lack of knowledge about PR in Europe. One of the final stages in the project involved an ethnographic analysis of PR in Europe, an exploration of its historical origins and specific characteristics, as well as of the possible interrelations in time and places between different national histories. The findings from this analysis were collected in an historical monograph coordinated by Betteke van Ruler¹¹ in spring 2004, which for the first time presented national viewpoints, in a chapter-per-country format.

2.1. *Europe makes history in the twenty-first century*

The first, still relatively rare full-length national histories of PR in Europe began to appear in the late twentieth century, but such publications have only started to make their presence felt in the research bibliography over the last ten years. Elisabeth Binder produced the most significant monograph study of the history of PR in this regard¹²; her work on the origins of business sector PR in the Federal Republic of Germany was published in 1983. While Binder dates the emergence of “public relations” practices as such in the country to the 1950s, when the market economy there was under construction, she did not overlook the existence of similar activities referred to in different terms that pre-dated such phenomena. In addition to citing early instances of PR precedents in Europe, Binder’s book also refuted another truism then prevalent in the US-centered research literature: PR in Germany did not arise so as to resolve social clashes between big business and public opinion; rather, it was designed to meet the need to exchange information. Although Binder’s contribution was highly significant in itself, the fact that it was written in German and published in an edition limited to the narrow confines of academia meant that it had little or no impact outside Germany.

Although other historical studies of this kind were published in Germany during the 1990s, most suffered the same fate as Binder’s work: they went largely unnoticed. However, a number of scholars in the US did begin to

¹⁰ Cfr. VERČIČ, D., “The European public relations body of knowledge”, *Journal of Communication Management*, London, vol. 4, n° 4, May 2000, pp. 341-354.

¹¹ Cfr. RULER, B. VAN, VERČIČ, D. (edit.), *Public Relations and Communication Management in Europe. A nation-by-nation introduction to public relations theory and practice*, Mouton De Gruyter, Berlin, 2004.

¹² Cfr. BINDER, Elisabeth, *Die Entstehung unternehmerischer Public Relations in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, Lit Verlag, Munster, 1983.

acknowledge that the development of the field in Germany may have been unfairly ignored in the history of PR. Hazleton and Kruckeberg held that the effort of the German people deserved recognition, not only as regards the economic reconstruction of the nation after World War II, but also in relation to the role of PR¹³. They argued that the contribution from Germany be noted in the history of PR, despite the fact that the research literature tended to attribute the pioneering European activity in this regard to the UK. Indeed, it seems as though a German company may have been the first business in Europe to establish a specialized PR department –in 1893.

In the mid-1990s, to address this lacuna in the historical narrative concerning German-speaking countries, Karl Nessmann wrote a short article that comprised a comparative account of the historical and theoretical development of PR in the US and Europe¹⁴. The article describes the historical development of PR in German-speaking countries such as Germany and Austria. Nessman takes a direct approach to the issue of the US origins of PR as an activity, citing the existence of similar activities as practiced in Europe at the end of the nineteenth century.

The first monograph historical study of PR in the UK was published in the early 2000s –a fluent and thorough text written by Jacquie L'Etang¹⁵, who endeavored to describe the true origins of PR in the UK without losing sight of the specific historical conditions involved. Thus, based on 67 oral interviews with pioneering figures in the field and documentation drawn from a number of relevant archives, her work provides a national perspective that is not dependent on the US-centered trend prevalent in the existing research literature.

Miller and Dinan have also added to the history of PR in the UK recently¹⁶; drawing on a brief overview of developments in the twentieth century, their 2008 book articulates a historical perspective detailing how PR has come to hold such great sway in public life. Based on the history of PR in the US,

¹³ Cfr. HAZLETON, Vincent, KRUCKEBERG, Dean, "European Public Relations Practice: An Evolving Paradigm", in CULBERTSON, Hugh M., CHEN, Ni (edit.), *International Public Relations: A Comparative Analysis*, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers, Mahwah, 1996, pp. 367-377.

¹⁴ Cfr. NESSMANN, Karl, "Public Relations in Europe: A Comparison with the United States", *Public Relations Review*, vol. 21, n°12, Summer 1995, pp. 151-160.

¹⁵ Cfr. L'ETANG, Jacquie, *Public Relations in Britain. A History of Professional Practice in the 20th century*, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, London, 2004.

¹⁶ Cfr. MILLER, David, DINAN, William, *A Century of Spin. How Public Relations Became the Cutting Edge of Corporate Power*, Pluto Press, London, 2008.

Miller and Dinan cite specific instances from the economic and political history of the UK as illustrative examples that enrich and broaden the historical narrative, all of which were imbricated in a democratic context.)

In recent times, UK scholars have renewed the focus on the study of history as a source of current and evolving knowledge of PR. Following the publication of a special issue of the *Journal of Communication Management* edited by Tom Watson (2008), the First International History of Public Relations Conference (IHPRC) was held in July 2010 at Bournemouth University. A number of prestigious and pioneering historians in the field were in attendance. The conference was so successful that it is now organized as an annual event; and the *Journal of Communication Management* is committed to publishing articles about the history of PR on a regular basis. As the German Günter Bentele explained in its last 2012 edition¹⁷:

The history of PR cannot be considered independently of different forms and structures of societies, political and economic systems, and the structure of 'the public sphere'. PR historiography must be embedded in a (theoretical) frame-work of social history, national histories, and world history.

2.2. New contributions to the history of PR from a US perspective

Margot O. Lamme and Karen Miller have recently published an enabling analysis of the history of PR over the course of the last one hundred years¹⁸. They argue that no aspect of the history of PR has been adequately explored. Refuting the argument presented by Miller herself in her 2000 book, they hold that twentieth-century historiography in this regard has not been shaped by a focus on the interests of large corporations. Their eighty-page monograph study presses strongly for further analysis extending back before 1900 and

¹⁷ BENTELE, Günter, "Is a general (and global) PR-historiography possible? Questions, Problems and Proposals", Keynote Speaker Presentation, International History of Public Relations Conference, Bournemouth University, July 8th, 2012. Available at (October, 8th, 2012): <http://microsites.bournemouth.ac.uk/historyofpr/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/IHPRC-2012-Presentations.pdf> Professors David McKie and Jordi Xifra also suggested at this 2012 last Conference de-nationalising times through historiography of PR and restoring PR to more national histories, cfr. *Ibid*.

¹⁸ Cfr. LAMME, Margot Opdycke, MILLER RUSSELL, Karen, "Removing the Spin: Toward a New Theory of Public Relations History", *Journalism Communication Monographs*, Winter 2011.

encompassing all countries and regions –not simply national and international lines of inquiry, but local analyses also, covering four areas in particular: religion; non-profit education and reform; politics and government; and business. They also call for further engagement with the five factors that seem to have fostered the emergence of PR as such: the need or desire to make money (the profit motive); recruitment (personnel, members, etc.); the quest for legitimacy; a campaign for or against (someone or some cause); and a need or interest in establishing relationships across sectors. Hence, Lamme and Miller dispute the linear, progressive paradigm set out in the existing research literature. Their argument enacts an attempt to address the history of PR from a broader perspective, and marks a move away from the dominant US-centered model of inquiry¹⁹.

3. *The history of PR in the UK, Italy, France, Germany and Spain*

The purpose of this section is to outline the history of PR in the UK, Italy, France, Germany and Spain. These country-by-country overviews formulated in historical and chronological terms deal implicitly with the main forces driving the development of PR outside the US –in particular, democracy, the market economy and society.

3.1. *UK*

The PR sector in the UK started out in the information offices run by local government bodies²⁰. The local government system played a key role in the early development of PR in the UK by forming a set of specialized professional staff, who would go on to set up the Institute of Public Relations (IPR), the first professional PR organization in Great Britain²¹. As discussed below, this group of administrative workers promoted professionalism in such activities

¹⁹ A new monograph covering wartime propaganda history has just been published. Cfr. LEE, Mordecai, *Promoting the War Effort: Robert Horton and Federal Propaganda 1938-1946*, Louisiana State University Press, Louisiana, 2012.

²⁰ Cfr. ANDERSON, Gavin, "A Global Look at Public Relations", in CANTOR, Bill (edit.), *Experts in action*, Longman, New York, 1989, pp. 418-419; L'ETANG, Jacquie, *op.cit.*

²¹ Cfr. L'ETANG, Jacquie, "State Propaganda and Bureaucratic Intelligence: the Creation of Public Relations in 20th Century Britain", *Public Relations Review*, vol. 24, n° 4, Winter 1998, p. 414.

and created a sense of public service through their work in information offices at local government bodies.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, serious accusations of corruption and a lack of transparency were made against the highest levels of government in the UK by media outlets voicing public opinion and civil servants working at lower levels in the system hierarchy. The National Association for Local Government Officers (NALGO) was established in 1905 to safeguard the rights of civil servants to claim better pensions and salaries, as well as to ensure that they could rise through the ranks within the civil service through open promotion procedures. In addition to improving the workplace and employment conditions of civil servants, NALGO also aimed to inform the public about the social role of government, which suffered from a poor reputation in general. Thus, the first leaders of NALGO saw that a press communications manager and an information committee would be required. This impetus was not implemented until the early 1930s when widespread budget cutbacks prompted a campaign to re-assess the social function of government bodies²².

The initiatives that fostered the significance and need for government communication services stemmed from articles published in the journal *Public Administration*, first published in 1923, a publication produced by the recently established Institute of Public Administration (1922). Thus, the term “public relations” may be assumed to have first been used in Europe due to these relatively early endeavors in the UK²³. The publication of many articles on such topics in the 1930s implies that both national and local government authorities in the UK were acutely aware of the significance of PR for the successful functioning of government as such²⁴.

Local government bodies were not alone in availing of these communications techniques. Central government authorities were also conscious of the usefulness of PR strategies in dealing with politics and diplomatic relations with other countries, which were marked by the imposition of totalitarian

²² The 1935 campaign included sending letters to the press, articles and brochures to be distributed among members of Parliament, a book Publisher to commemorate the centenary of public administrations, the organisation of writing contests, exhibitions, conferences at universities and colleges, newspapers supplements to *The Times*, etc. In regards to the internal communication campaign, a Baltic Sea cruise was offered to 500 members of NALGO in order to learn about public administrations of the countries in the region. Cfr. *Ibid.*, p. 415.

²³ It should not be forgotten that Bernays published his *Crystallizing Public Opinion*, where the term “public relations counsel” was first explicitly mentioned and explained, in 1923.

²⁴ Cfr. L'ETANG, Jacquie, “State Propaganda and Bureaucratic Intelligence: the Creation of Public Relations in 20th Century Britain”..., p. 417.

regimes in Germany, Italy and Russia during the interwar period. The political success of such regimes prompted a debate concerning how the UK might address the emerging situation, by using propaganda to counteract the apparent threat of information broadcast from countries under totalitarian control. Moreover, at the end World War I, the UK also faced other problems that had the potential to affect the established political order, such as the status of workers during and after the economic crisis and the implementation of mechanized means of industrial production, along with the rise of socialist movements. The successful operation of the Ministry of Information during World War I was called into question following the end of the conflict because its propaganda functions were no longer seen as wholly compatible with the conditions of a democratic country in times of peace. At the same time, however, another strong current of opinion held that insofar as it provided citizens with information about government authorities and educated the public about political and legislative developments, propaganda could play a key part in strengthening democratic structures.

In 1926, worried by the decline in the UK's economic dominance of international markets, which was matched by a parallel deterioration in the national economic state, the government set up the Empire Marketing Board (EMB) to consolidate imperial values and ground them more thoroughly in British popular culture²⁵. The Board's seven-year lifespan was marked by controversy: as an official institution at the service of the (primarily economic) interests of the British Empire, and functioning as a 'Ministry of External Trade', it generated as much opposition as it did interest. The EMB played a significant role in the evolution of government PR services and is regarded as the predecessor to the Ministry of Information established during World War II, as well as the Central Office of Information set up later. Two pioneering figures in the field of PR were brought together through the EMB: John Grierson (1898-1972), an expert in using cinema to educate mass audiences; and Sir Stephen Tallents (1884-1958), head of the EMB²⁶.

²⁵ Cfr. CONSTANTINE, Stephen, *Buy and Build. The Advertising Posters of the Empire Marketing Board*, Her Majesty's Stationery Office, London, 1986, p. 1.

²⁶ For more information regarding these two English PR pioneers, cfr.: L'ETANG, Jacquie, "John Grierson and the public relations industry in Britain", *Screening the Past*, Issue 7, July 1999, p. 2; and L'ETANG, Jacquie, "State Propaganda and Bureaucratic Intelligence: the Creation of Public Relations in 20th Century Britain"..., pp. 425-426. A new book has been published about Stephen Tallents and his influence on British history, cfr. ANTHONY, Scott, *Public Relations and the Making of Modern Britain: Stephen Tallents and the Birth of a progressive Media Profession*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2012.

The use of PR strategies was not confined solely to the public sector at that time. Albeit to a lesser extent, the private sector also contributed to the development of PR, insofar as it helped shape organizational structures, while likewise using PR for publicity purposes, as government authorities had done previously. The pioneering figures in the field were active as far back as the 1920s: Sydney Walton, whose PR activity began in 1920, following his stint as press secretary to Lloyd George; and Basil Clarke, a correspondent for Reuters who had gone on to work for the government intelligence services during World War I²⁷. The first PR training courses were offered during the 1930s, but university-level education in the sector did not become available until some fifty years later²⁸.

During World War II, the Ministry of Information undertook propaganda operations once again. Apart from enforcing censorship, the prerogative of the Ministry also encompassed the coordination of propaganda at the war-front, in the UK itself, as well as in other countries that were not declared enemies of the state but that had remained apparently neutral. By the end of World War II, the UK had invested heavily in propaganda operations, in both material and personnel terms. Such commitment may explain why the Ministry of Information was not dissolved at the end of the war; rather, its name was simply changed to the Central Office of Information (COI), and agents selected by the government information service were appointed to work in the COI.

Most of those working at COI were members of NALGO, and immediately sought official recognition of their professional status. Beginning in August 1946, a number of prominent NALGO personnel inaugurated a series of meetings to set up an official body to award such professional recognition of PR work, which led to the establishment of the Institute of Public Relations (IPR) in 1948. The bureaucratic skills of its founding members (most of whom belonged to the EMB, NALGO or the British Council)²⁹ ensured an effective management process from the start. Given that it has been closely linked to

²⁷ Cfr. WHITE, Jon, L'ETANG, Jacquie & MOSS, Danny, "The United Kingdom: Advances, in Practice in a Restless Kingdom", in SRIRAMESH, Krishnamurthy and VERČIČ, Dejan (edit.), *The Global Public Relations Handbook...* 2009, p. 383.

²⁸ The University of Stirling was the first to offer postgraduate courses in PR in 1988. Other universities such as Bournemouth, Leeds Metropolitan and Central Lancashire followed with degrees in PR. KOPER, Eric, "Great Britain", in RULER, Betteke van; VERČIČ, Dejan (edit.), *op. cit.*, p. 478.

²⁹ PEARSON, J., TURNER, G., *The Persuasion Industry*, Readers Union Eyre & Spottiswoode Publishers Ltd., London, 1966, pp. 435-436.

propaganda and political operations in the past, the first challenge faced by the IPR was to foster a positive reputation for themselves and PR as an activity.

J. H. Brebner wrote the first book about PR in the UK; *Public Relations and Publicity* (1949) was published by the Institute of Public Administration, and described PR as an administrative and management tool with a twofold objective: to motivate workers and to counteract the negative effects of business specialization so as to ensure operational integration within a company.

In the early 1950s, many PR professionals in the UK worked towards the foundation of the International Public Relations Association (IPRA) (the Europe-based international association). In fact, the first president of the IPRA (1955–1957) was Sir Tomas Fife Clark, one of the founding members of the association, who combined his IPRA role with his position as director of the COI, a post he also held in the 1960s. Social change in the UK prompted greater pluralism of values and behaviors in the 1960s and 1970s. PR played a part in fostering such new values, referred to collectively as “civic pluralism”. This pluralism also had an impact on the economic situation. PR strategies were used to promote these new values by communicating the ideas formulated by political parties, think tanks, business associations and civic opinion-makers, and to stimulate market activity. The rapid progress of pluralism, both civic and commercial, contributed to the development of PR in the 1960s and 1970s.

In short, this historical overview of the UK suggests a number of forces that shaped the development of PR over the course of the twentieth century. PR may be framed as an institutional response to two key interests: on the one hand, the ongoing advance of democracy and, on the other hand, the conviction concerning the role played by public opinion in the functioning of politics and government³⁰. The impetus for improvements in local and central government authorities in the interwar period came from civil servants and other officials keen to garner professional status for their work and to define such activity as a public service to communities. This conception of PR, so innovative for its time, was recorded by such officials in the accounts they published in the institutional publication of the Institute of Public Administration, *Public Administration*. Nevertheless, in 1936, PR were regarded as relations with the general public, closely bound up with the intelligence services as well as internal and external political processes. The crucial role played by PR in government moves to reinforce “democracy” must be understood

³⁰ L'ETANG, Jacquie, “John Grierson and the public relations industry in Britain...”, 1999, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

in those terms³¹. Given such close ties to government operations until the end of World War II, it is hardly surprising that PR and propaganda tended to be seen as synonymous³². Hence, it seems clear that the democratic political context in the UK was a key condition for the development of PR there.

3.2. Italy

Research bibliography on the history of PR in Italy is particularly scarce. Most of the published articles and texts point to the end of World War II as the time when PR began to emerge there. A number of scholars also highlight specific contextual difficulties relating to the implementation of PR in the Italy of that time: the strength of public opinion had been significantly debilitated by the political regime in power before and during the war³³, and the post-war economy was in ruins³⁴. Since Italy was the first enemy territory in Europe to be invaded, the country was regarded by the Allies (led by the US) as a testing ground for how friendly relationships might be built with local communities. Whatever the case may be, the prevalent historical account is that PR arose as an American concept in Italy in the summer of 1943, when US troops landed on Sicily, a view that would seem to preclude the possibility of any history of PR in Italy prior to that time³⁵.

Nevertheless, some recent research articles have made tentative reference to PR precedents dating to the 1930s³⁶. Toni Muzi Falconi cites the interactive listening systems developed by the fascist regime and, in more specific terms, the occupation of Ethiopia (then Abyssinia) by Mussolini in 1936 and the measures taken to overcome the opposition of the British government.

³¹ Cfr. WHITE, Jon, L'ETANG, Jacquie & MOSS, Danny, "The United Kingdom: Advances, in Practice in a Restless Kingdom...", 2009, p. 383.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 1.

³³ Cfr. POCHARD, J., "Naissance des Relations Publiques en Italie", en A.F.A.P. (Association Française pour l'Accroissement de la Productivité), *Les Relations Publiques dans la Société Moderne*, Collection: Études et Temoignages, n° 4, Edit. Société Auxiliaire pour la Diffusion des Editions de Productivité (S.A.D.E.P.), Paris, 1957, pp. 136-140.

³⁴ BINI, Elisabetta, FASCE, Ferdinando, MUZI FALCONI, Toni, *op. cit.*, p. 210.

³⁵ MUZI FALCONI, Toni y KODILJA, Renata "Italy", in RULER, Betteke van; VERČIČ, Dejan (edit.), *op. cit.*, p. 229.

³⁶ Cfr. MUZI FALCONI, Toni, "Public Relations- the Italian scenario", *European Public Relations News*, vol. 1, n° 3, December 2002. Cfr. MUZI FALCONI, Toni, "Public Relations in Italy: Master of Ceremonies in a Relational Society", in SRIRAMESH, Krishnamurthy and VERČIČ, Dejan (Edit.), *op. cit.*, pp. 485-486.

According to recently accessed documents, the Italian dictator was concerned about British lobbying in Washington, the purpose of which was to shift the US position on the issue from neutrality to disapproval³⁷. Mussolini dispatched Bernardo Bergamaschi, the Minister of Propaganda, to the United States, to hire a PR agency to help counteract British endeavors in this regard. Although the name of the PR agency hired remains unknown, the effectiveness of its intervention is clear from the historical record: the Italian government rolled out a campaign mobilizing the majority of Italian-Americans to contact the White House and explain the reasons justifying the Italian annexation of Abyssinia. This campaign came at no financial cost to Mussolini's government: the PR agency managed to cover the costs by issuing vouchers which were purchased by member of the Italian community based in the US.

The political climate in post-war Italy also evinced a number of PR-related activities. The Italian Socialist party won a resounding success in the first democratic elections held in Italy in 1946; its tally of votes was higher even than the number of votes cast for the Communist party, with which it had signed a unity agreement³⁸. The American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations trade unions, which merged in 1955 becoming the AFL-CIO, in conjunction with the US State Department, entrusted Vanni Montana, one of the latter's Italian-American PR specialists, with the task of infiltrating the Italian Socialist party and provoking a split that led to the foundation of a social-democratic party, thus preventing a socialist-communist majority in the future. Giuseppe Saragat, who would later become President of Italy, always acknowledged the brilliant success of Montana's lobbying efforts. Following the defeat of the socialist-communist coalition in the 1948 elections, the United States Information Service (USIS) organization, which had been engaged in clandestine operations in Italy since 1943, launched a PR campaign to disseminate Western values –that is to say, American values– throughout Italian society³⁹. This program continued into the 1960s and served as a training ground for many Italian PR professionals, who were largely based in Milan (private sector) and Rome (public sector).

The business world also took an early interest in PR during the post-war period. The Pirelli company's PR activities are noteworthy for two reasons: first, because the company succeeded in bringing together a group of

³⁷ Cfr. MUZI FALCONI, Toni, "Public Relations- the Italian scenario", *European Public Relations News*, vol. 1, n° 3, December 2002, p. 32.

³⁸ Cfr. MUZI FALCONI, T., "Public Relations- the Italian scenario...", *op. cit.*, p. 33.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

intellectuals from a wide variety of cultural backgrounds in such a way as to give Pirelli an added value beyond the basic idea of production; and second, because it launched a regular company publication, the first of its kind in Italy, which would go on to be regarded as very prestigious⁴⁰. This was the “Pirelli” magazine that addressed social issues and explored interesting cultural phenomena⁴¹.

In addition to the Pirelli story, the experience of the Olivetti company has become an emblematic example of the early history of PR in Italy⁴². The Olivetti campaign comprised a global application of PR, perhaps the most important of its kind in Italy. Olivetti’s use of PR enabled a geographically peripheral company to establish a central position in the market, first in Italy itself and thereafter throughout the world⁴³.

Life in Italy in the 1950s was marked by the effort to complete the reconstruction of the country following the devastation of war. At the same time as Pirelli and Olivetti had begun to implement PR strategies, Enrico Mattei, the legendary founder of *Ente Nazionale Idrocarburi* (ENI), a State-controlled oil company, undertook direct negotiations with Arab producers to purchase oil, thus bypassing the mediation of other world powers⁴⁴. He hired two respected journalists, Italo Pietra and Mario Pirani, to head up the public and international division of his media relations department.

The *Istituto di Ricostruzione Industriale* (IRI) is another relevant example in the field of State-controlled enterprises. Having worked for Pirelli for five years, Leonardo Sinisgalli began to edit the corporate magazine *Civiltà delle Macchine* (“The Machine Civilization”)⁴⁵ for the Istituto in January 1953, a publication in which he finally gave full expression to a clear perspective in analytical, precise and reader-friendly prose⁴⁶. In addition to this publishing work, of which he was editor-in-chief until 1959, Sinisgalli was also responsible (with Franco Fedeli) for directing internal relations at the heart of the institution,

⁴⁰ Cfr. ROGGERO, G. A. et al., *Le Relazioni Pubbliche*, Franco Angeli Editore, Milano, 1993, pp. 61-62.

⁴¹ Cfr. MUZI FALCONI, T., “Public Relations- the Italian scenario...”, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

⁴² Cfr. ROGGERO, G. A. et al., *op. cit.*, pp. 60-61.

⁴³ For further information, cfr. VERDIER, Henri, *Las Relaciones Públicas*, Colección: Enciclopedia práctica de marketing, vol. 4, Francisco Casanovas Ediciones, Barcelona, 1971, pp. 159-163.

⁴⁴ Cfr. MUZI FALCONI, T., “Public Relations- the Italian scenario...”, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

⁴⁶ Cfr. OTTIERI, Alessandra, “Leonardo Sinisgalli e ‘I cinque anni della Pirelli’ (1948-1952)”, *Sinestesie. Rivista di studi sulle letterature e le arti europee*, May 2002, Secondo Quaderno, Anno I, p. 9.

which suffered from a lack of structural cohesion between left-wing Catholic leaders and a communist-led trade union movement⁴⁷.

Among the pioneering figures in the early days of Italian PR were such experts as Alvisè Barison, co-founder of the first professional PR association in Italy; Vittorio Crainz and Piero Arnaldi, who in 1956 set up SIPR, the first PR consultancy agency in Rome; Guido De Rossi del Lion Nero, a civil servant who bridged the divide between Italians and the Allies, a friend of Edward Bernays' and co-author of the "Code of Athens"; Guido López, a manager of the first branch of the J.W. Thompson PR; and Aldo Chiappe, who opened the first PR agency in Milan, Aldo Chiappe, Studio PR, in 1961⁴⁸.

Therefore, the general consensus among researchers is the PR as a profession is a relatively recent development in Italy, dating to after World War II⁴⁹. However, as also proved the case in France, the first PR specialists expressed a marked interest in education and the creation of professional associations. Professor Roberto Tremelloni, a noted social democrat who would go on to serve as Minister for Finance, was president of the *Istituto per le Relazioni Pubbliche*, founded in Milan in 1952⁵⁰. This institute was the first association of its kind in the field of PR, and its mission was to raise awareness about PR and its methodology in relation to both public and private organizational management –a task that was especially challenging due to a social climate in which information strategies were not an established public concern. The association ran courses for government bodies –in particular, the Treasury Ministry– which comprised “the first seed of the teaching and spread of PR in Italy”⁵¹.

Thanks to the work of a small number of committed individuals who had worked together in the Marshall Plan information service, the *Associazione Italiana di Relazioni Pubbliche* (A.I.R.P.) was set up in Rome in 1954⁵². The *Associazione*'s founder and president was Guido de Rossi del Lion Nero. The

⁴⁷ Cfr. MUZI FALCONI, T., “Public Relations- the Italian scenario...”, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

⁴⁹ Cfr. DE ROSSI DEL LION NERO, G., “Veinte años de Relaciones Públicas en Italia”, *Relaciones Públicas*, March-April issue, 1972, pp. 27-29.

⁵⁰ This Institute along with the *Associazione Italiana di Relazioni Pubbliche* (born next in 1954 in Rome) were responsible for the introduction of PR in Italy. Cfr. ROGGERO, G. A. et al., *op. cit.*, pp. 56-64.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

⁵² Cfr. GIMÉNEZ-ARRIBAS, J., “Las Relaciones Públicas en Europa Occidental”, *Documentación Administrativa. Boletín Mensual de la Secretaría General Técnica de la Presidencia del Gobierno*, n° 5, May 1958, Madrid, p. 68.

Istituto per le Relazioni Pubbliche and A.I.R.P. shared certain functions, although the activity of the latter centered principally on industry and foreign enterprises. One of the successes achieved by the A.I.R.P. was Italian membership of IPRA and CERP, thus garnering international and European recognition for the sector.

In any case, however, one of the primary challenges facing A.I.R.P. in its initial stages was the rehabilitation of public opinion, a fundamental building block of democratic development, a force that had been largely undermined by the previous political regime. In this regard, the objective was to persuade a range of social groups of the importance of information, a significance that was wholly unrelated to the strategies and actions of the totalitarian regime that had held sway in recent times⁵³. Hence, one of the key contributions made by PR in Italy was to the construction of a systematic pedagogical structure, which mirrored the provision of information concerning the objectives, modes and means of PR –in other words, a twofold task combining formation and information.

The A.I.R.P. enacted its combined mission of formation and information through conferences, seminars and courses, which were attended by representatives of public bodies, trade unions and private companies. In fact, the most pressing challenge facing the A.I.R.P. in its early days was to train enough PR consultants to meet the need for such professionals. To this end, the *Istituto Superiore Internazionale per lo Studio delle Relazioni Pubbliche* was established in Milan⁵⁴, which was to train all such specialists until the first university PR programs became available in the 1980s at the *Università di Lingue e Comunicazione*, also in Milan⁵⁵.

The subsequent period in the history of PR associations, from 1962 to 1970, was somewhat more complex and difficult. A number of associations appeared during that time, and not until 1970 did they join forces to create the *Federazione Relazioni Pubbliche Italiana* (F.E.R.P.I.)⁵⁶. One of the foundational purposes of the association was to ensure legal recognition of the profession,

⁵³ Cfr. POCHARD, M. J., “Naissance des Relations Publiques en Italie”, in: A.F.A.P. (Association Française pour l’Accroissement de la Productivité), *Les Relations Publiques dans la Société Moderne*, Edit. Société Auxiliaire pour la Diffusion des Editions de Productivité (S.A.D.E.P.), Paris, 1957 (?), pp. 136-140.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 138.

⁵⁵ Cfr. MUZI FALCONI, Toni, “Public Relations in Italy: Master of Ceremonies in a Relational Society”, in SRIRAMESH, Krishnamurthy and VERGÉ Dejan (edit.), *op. cit.*, p. 487.

⁵⁶ Cfr. DE ROSSI DEL LION NERO, G., “Veinte años de Relaciones Públicas en Italia...”, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

in addition to encouraging debate about the role of PR in society and the formulation of a code of ethics⁵⁷.

In conclusion, therefore, PR in Italy may be said to have emerged after World War II; it was markedly American in its initial stages due to the role of US PR specialists. Nevertheless, that the profession had significant precedents within the country to which relatively little attention has been paid in the historical record should also be noted. PR activity in Italy became rooted and grew quickly in the fertile ground of an industrialized society, in line with the articulation of the first democratic discourses in the country, while also contributing to the development of the public sphere as such and fostering relationships between companies, the State, democracy and consumption⁵⁸. Thus, it would appear as though the emergence of PR in Italy presupposed the existence of a free and pluralist society, with a free market and a growing social awareness of such issues as democratic enterprise⁵⁹.

In spite of these conclusions, however, the fact that many of the activities described by researchers as precedents, including some of the first campaigns, were political lobbying interventions which often functioned on the border between the provision of objective, free information and propaganda should not be overlooked. Such campaigns involved the use of techniques in the private and public sectors for very different ends. Thus, although research literature on the early days of PR in Italy evinces a context of industrialization and economic growth, frequent reference is also made the need to rehabilitate public opinion, which had been radically undermined by previous political regimes. One of the objectives of the PR campaigns in themselves was to bring about such rehabilitation, rather than the contrary. Hence, despite the fact that the political context may not be especially democratic, there would also appear to be a need for a climate of economic growth and expansion.

3.3. *France*

The first attempt to set up a PR agency in France was not a success; its failure may have been due to an inhospitable social climate. During the inter-

⁵⁷ Cfr. MUZI FALCONI, T., "Public Relations- the Italian scenario...", *op. cit.*, p. 35.

⁵⁸ BINI, Elisabetta, FASCE, Ferdinando, MUZI FALCONI, Toni, *op. cit.*, p. 219; VALENTINI, Chiara, "Italian public relations in a changing world: Historical overview, current questions and future challenges", *PRism*, vol. 6, n° 2, 2009, p. 3.

⁵⁹ D'ÁVILA CAMPANELLA MESTRE, L., "A Atividade de Relações Públicas na Itália", 2003.

war period, the impetus in France was to foster a party political consensus based on a sense of unity. Except for the period 1924-1926, when France was governed by a coalition of left-wing socialist and radical parties, the political scene in France during the 1920s was dominated by right-wing coalition governments. A group of US professionals first came to France in 1924 to set up a PR company; however, the series of conferences about PR they organized drew very small audiences⁶⁰. Besides this US-led endeavor, a number of French companies launched a range of initiatives before World War II. In 1937, the automobile company Renault employed a “social engineer”⁶¹ whose role was to manage interpersonal relationships. Similarly, Péchiney, the large chemical corporation undertook to publish detailed financial accounts for the benefit of its shareholders and other interested parties.

However, the initiatives described above were more or less intuitive; PR as such was not established in France until the arrival of US troops and the implementation of the Marshall Plan at the end of World War II. Through what became known as “missions de productivité”⁶², French business men travelled to the US and saw PR in operation there; they were quick to apply such strategies themselves on their return. Early adopters in this regard were French subsidiary branches of US companies, especially in the oil industry, which has led a number of scholars to conclude that the introduction of PR into France be attributed to oil companies⁶³.

Starting in 1946, the philosophy of PR was introduced in France by Esso-Standard. Drawing on the example of its parent-company in the US, it was the first company in France to set up a PR department, under the leadership of Jean Choppin de Janvry, who had taken part in one of the above-mentioned “missions de productivité”. Interest in the overall purpose of PR was keen, and a range of ideas were put into practice, including a company magazine and a manual for employees. However, the strategy took shape gradually and was not implemented fully until the in-house PR service was established independently of the “Advertising Service”⁶⁴. Between 1947 and 1948, with the approval of the Ministry of Education in France, Esso Standard ran an information service for educators, who comprised the target readership for the magazine “Pétrole-

⁶⁰ Cfr. LOUGOVOY, Constantin, HUISMAN, Denis, *Traité de Relations Publiques*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1981, p. 17.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 18.

⁶³ CARAYOL, Valérie, “France”, en RULER, Betteke van; VERČIČ, Dejan (edit.), *op. cit.*, p. 137.

⁶⁴ Cfr. VERDIER, Henri, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

Progrès”, in addition to educational material related to the oil industry. These materials were produced and printed by the US parent-company⁶⁵.

A similar approach was taken by the other companies in the sector: the US company Caltex, where Lucien Matrat⁶⁶ worked as PR Director, and the British company Shell Petroleum. Convinced of the advantages of doing so in Europe, and persuaded perhaps of the need for transparency in terms of the provision of information by the policy of nationalization pursued by the Labour government in the UK after World War II, Shell located its PR department in France⁶⁷. In light of the nationalization of the rail, gas and electricity sectors in France, large oil companies were likewise acutely aware of the possibility that they too might be nationalized. Indeed, it is possible that the significant steps first taken by Esso Standard prevented the eventual nationalization of the oil industry in France⁶⁸.

These oil companies were an example to other types of business: there was a marked increase in research publications on PR activity and in the number of PR agencies during the 1950s. The first PR agency in France was called Relations; it was launched by Henri Pineau, an advertising executive, and Géo-Charles V éran, a journalist. Among other agencies established thereafter were *L'Office Français de Relations Publiques* (George Serrel); *International Relations* (René Tavernier) and *Le Bureau International de Relations Publiques* (Pierre J égu)⁶⁹. PR had made a strong start in France⁷⁰.

⁶⁵ Five years later (1952), Esso Standard organised conferences at every French education centres and, from 1955 onwards, school trips to new oilfields and also produced films especially designed to illustrate Geography school courses. Cfr. LOUGOVOY, Constantin, HUISMAN, Denis, *op. cit.*, pp. 18-19.

⁶⁶ Lucien Matrat is commonly regarded as one of the most important pioneers of European PR. He worked as a PR practitioner for oil companies such as Caltex and Elf. We should also mention his work as director of External Relations for the *Union Industrielle de Pétroles* (Paris), his role as a founding member of A.F.R.E.P. and CERP. And finally, his main contribution was the popular Code of Ethics/Athens, adopted by IPRA in 1965.

⁶⁷ Cfr. VERDIER, Henri, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

⁶⁸ Cfr. LOUGOVOY, Constantin, HUISMAN, Denis, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

⁶⁹ Cfr. CHAUMELY, Jean, HUISMAN, Denis, *Les Relations Publiques*, Series: “Que sais-je?”, Le point des Connaissances actuelles, n° 966, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1963, pp. 12-15.

⁷⁰ With regard to the importation of the expression “public relations”, two well known academics coined the term “relationniste” on their book to refer to a professional of the field in 1962. However, though the term was indeed adopted by other francophone countries such as Belgium, Switzerland or the Canadian region of Québec, France did not. Cfr. CHAUMELY, Jean, HUISMAN, Denis, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

The institutionalization of PR in France unfolded over the course of the same time-period. A dozen or so PR practitioners met at the Hotel d'Astorg in Paris in 1949 to analyze US PR strategies and to see how they could be adapted to the distinctive features of the French context. These meetings gave rise to the first association of PR specialists, the *Club de la Maison de Verre*, which was also set up in 1949. The *Association Professionnelle des Relations Publiques* (APROREP) appeared in 1952. On 7 January 1955, the *Club de la Maison de Verre* merged with APROREP under a new name, the *Association Française des Relations Publiques* (A.F.R.E.P.). In light of its twofold origin, this professional association had two primary objectives: first, "the development of PR in France and collective study of the theoretical bases and modes of practical application in PR"⁷¹; and second, "the safeguarding of a shared ethics, and principles of honor and dignity among members of the profession"⁷².

The first practical training courses for PR professionals grew out of private undertakings such as Francis Dumont's *Institut des Relations Publiques*, the *Collège des Sciences Sociales et Économiques* and the *École Française des Attachés de Presse*, which were founded in Paris and Lyons respectively, in 1961⁷³. In addition to these private initiatives, the professional associations also undertook to organize training programs for in-house and external advisors, press associates, as well as PR departments, agencies and services. The first A.F.R.E.P. Congress was held in Strasburg in 1967 and explored the future of PR; the keynote speakers included John W. Hill, President of Hill and Knowlton Co., one of the most prominent and successful international PR agencies⁷⁴ at that time, and Lucien Matrat.

Legal recognition of the professionalization of PR companies in France was soon to follow. On 23 October 1964, the Minister of Information, Alain Peyrefitte, granted the PR sector in France legal status. An official definition of PR was set out in the first article of the ministerial decree; PR was clearly distinguished from other communication activities such as advertising and journalism⁷⁵. The decree marked the official establishment of PR in France.

⁷¹ Cfr. [unknown], "La Asociación Francesa de Relaciones Públicas", *Relaciones Públicas*, n° 14, septiembre-octubre 1964, Madrid, pp. 11-12.

⁷² For further information regarding the organisation of the new profession and other association movements, cfr. LOUGOVOY, Constantin, HUISMAN, Denis, *op. cit.*, pp. 24-41.

⁷³ CARAYOL, Valérie, *op. cit.*, p. 139.

⁷⁴ Cfr. TOMÁS BRAVO, C. M., "Doctrina europea de Relaciones Públicas. Su presente y su futuro", *Revista del Instituto de Ciencias Sociales*, n° 10, 1967, pp. 187-191.

⁷⁵ LOUGOVOY, Constantine, LINON, Michel, *Relaciones Públicas: función de gobierno de la empresa y de la administración*, Editorial Hispano Europea, Barcelona, 3rd edition, 1983, pp. 17-18.

The ministerial text provides a detailed account of the role of PR, and asserts the need to provide the citizens of the country with objective and honest information. Moreover, PR as a profession is explicitly described as distinct from the roles of journalist or advertising agent⁷⁶. The official recognition of PR in France was the outcome of the commitment of associations specializing in professional training in the early 1960s⁷⁷. Besides, the need for PR as part of government activity led the central government to engage in PR.

The 1968 political and social 'revolution' in France that echoed around the world foregrounded the significance of communication and spurred the implementation of PR services by private companies and by government bodies. The Ministry of PR, a State Secretariat answering to the Office of the Prime Minister, was established in 1969; Jacques Baumel was its director until 1972. However, it would seem that this Ministry may have undermined the concept of PR⁷⁸. The need for a trade union for information and communication workers was met in March 1973 with the emergence of the *Syndicat National des Professionnels de L'Information et de la Communication*, which later merged with the *Union Nationale des Attachés de Presse* and the *Association Française des Relations Publiques* to form the *Fédération Française des Relations Publiques*⁷⁹.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, prompted perhaps by the development of international exchanges between multinational companies that confirmed

⁷⁶ It seems French academics were worried in the early beginnings about the differences between PR and other disciplines such as propaganda or advertising. For instance, Lucien Matrat wrote a letter in French to Albert Oeckl, one of the German PR pioneers explaining the differences as follows: "Ainsi par comparaison avec la publicité "stratégie du désir" et la propagande "stratégie du conditionnement", les relations publiques allaient être la "stratégie de la confiance". He then concluded: "Une entreprise pourrait elle vivre et prospérer sans la confiance de ses clients, de ses banquiers, de tous ceux, qui á un titre quelconque, détiennent une parcelle de pouvoir qu'ils peuvent exercer en sa faveur ou contre elle? Sachant que la confiance ne se prend pas, mais qu'elle se gagne, qu'elle se mérite, ta démarche allait être marquée par cette nécessité de respecter dans la «relations á et avec l'autre» une morale rigoureuse, une éthique de comportement fondée sur le respect de l'autre, sur une permanente recherche de compatibilité entre ses attentes et les possibilités d'y répondre et le dialogue allait, tout naturellement, devenir l'outil privilégié de la communication", MATRAT, Lucien, in: FLIEGER, Hans, *Public Relations. Das Lebenwerk von Albert Oeckl*, Verlag für deutsche Wirtschaftsbiographien, Studien zu Theorie und Praxis der Public Relations: Band 56, Wiesbaden, 1994, pp. 12-13. Albert Oeckl's 75th anniversary reprint edition of 1984 book.

⁷⁷ Some examples were: *L'Institut des Relations Publiques*, established by Francis Dumont (1919-1982) in 1954, *Le Collège des Sciences Sociales et Economiques*, or *L'École Française des Attachés de Presse* (in Paris and Lyon). Cfr. CHAUMELY, Jean, HUISMAN, Denis, *op. cit.*, pp. 12-15.

⁷⁸ Cfr. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15.

a trend towards globalization, the French government began to work with a more global conception of communication. The role of *relationniste* began to give way to the post of “Director of Communications”⁸⁰.

3.4. Germany

In comparison to the other European countries discussed above, an overview of the situation in Germany discloses a number of distinctive features. The most significant of these is the remarkable interest in the history of PR in academic circles in Germany over the last thirty years. As a result, German research articles and other academic texts far outnumber those published in all the other countries combined, enabling a comprehensive, chronological account of the history of PR in Germany. However, the fact that these sources were available only in German prevented their incorporation into a more wide-ranging and nuanced framework for a European (as opposed to a US-influenced) theory of PR. The German-based theory outlined below shows that on the basis of research, and in line with the history of PR in the US, other countries may trace historical precedents of PR activity to the nineteenth century, albeit such endeavors were referred to under different headings or names. Moreover, the historical circumstances that shaped the context in which PR developed in Germany imply a set of conditions for the emergence of such activity that is in no way similar to the American state of affairs. The history of PR in Germany has been forged by the nexus of economic, political and social factors prevalent in different historical periods⁸¹.

Nevertheless, the research consensus in Germany is that the professional status of PR was not established there until after World War II, as was the case in other countries (except for the US). The formulation of a theoretical framework for the field may also be dated to the post-war period. Thus, the emergence of PR as an area of study came later in Germany than in the US, where the histories of practice and theory overlap one another. However, in light of the precedents in business activities identified by researchers, PR

⁸⁰ CARAYOL, Valérie, *op. cit.*, pp. 138-139.

⁸¹ According to different periods of German history, some academics have pointed out that there may be six different periods of German PR history, cfr. BENTELE, Günter & JUNGHÄNE, Yvonne, “Germany”, in RULER, Betteke van, VERČIČ, Dejan (edit.), *op. cit.*, pp. 156-157 y pp. 157-159. In summary, German academics question whether it is possible to talk about a general PR Historiography, cfr. BENTELE, Günter, “Is a general (and global) PR-historiography possible?...”, *op. cit.*

practice in Germany progressed in a markedly different context. The fact that such precedents did not come to light until the late twentieth century may be attributed to the fact that the research literature in the field tended to privilege the US-related bibliography, thus overlooking or omitting (temporarily at least) part of its own history. A number of German scholars have pointed out that centering analysis on the use of the term “public relations” compromises historical study undertaken in other countries (that is, outside the US) by obscuring the meaning of synonyms and equivalent terms denoting PR-related activities⁸². Indeed, the importation of US theory in this regard and, above all, reading the term “public relations” as synonymous with the origin of PR as a practice in most countries after 1945 has produced a blind-spot in the history of PR in Europe.

Before proceeding to a discussion of the adaptation and development of US-centered PR theory in post-war Germany, a brief account of some of the German historical precedents uncovered and analyzed by researchers may be worthwhile. A network of communication channels between the State, companies and other organizations, as well as the general public, may be traced in Germany from the late-nineteenth century onwards. However, such communicative events tend to be isolated phenomena, lacking an underlying theory or systematic framework capable of binding them together. Such activities are categorized in German under the headings “*Kontaktpflege*” (care for relationships) and “*Öffentlichkeitsarbeit*” (work on public opinion), rather than the term “public relations”. PR-related precedents in Germany occurred in two different spheres: the State sector and private enterprise.

PR precedents in the State sector may be traced back as far as the mid-nineteenth century, when a range of organizations reflecting the concern of government bodies to cultivate public opinion first appeared, almost fortuitously. The most prominent of these ministerial information services and *Nachrichtenbüros* (news offices) was the project led by Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz. In 1894, von Tirpitz persuaded the Secretary of State of the need to improve the image of the Navy, by means of a detailed and carefully implemented plan to foster a positive relationship with the German public. One of the techniques von Tirpitz used was to appoint an officer on every German navy warship whose role was to supply information to the press and to members of the public taking guided tours of the vessels. This endeavor to enhance the reputation of the Navy was complemented through new relationships with the

⁸² Cfr. BINDER, E., *Die Entstehung unternehmerischer Public Relations in der Bundes-republik Deutschland*, Lit Verlag, Munster, 1983, pp. 46-55.

leaders of important social groups, a modern re-design of navy uniforms, the setting up of army music bands and the production of specialist publications. However, Admiral von Tirpitz's project was exceptional; the other PR-type precedents in nineteenth-century Germany were more closely linked to censorship and war propaganda⁸³.

The first PR precedent in the private sector was afforded by Alfred Krupp in the steel industry. In 1851, Krupp produced the largest ever piece of cast steel and prepared it for transportation to London, where it was put on display in his company's pavilion at the Great Exhibition held in Crystal Palace (London) that year. The response to the piece, which weighed a total of two tons, was sensational; it was featured on the front pages of many newspapers. Although he was not familiar with the term "public relations", Krupp was the best ambassador and representative his company could have had⁸⁴; Carl Hundhausen, a pioneering figure in German PR and Head of PR at Krupps in the twentieth century, was full of praise for the intuitive success of the company's founder⁸⁵. In addition to enhancing the company's image, it also features in the historical record because in 1893 it became the first company to set up an in-house press department; this development was an initiative led by Friedrich Alfred Krupp, son of the company's founder, who entrusted the management of the project

⁸³ Even academics such as Bentele suggest more than a philanthropic aim in this apparently innocent improvement of the Marine's image. By the end of the nineteenth century, the bouyant German economy was developing very fast and it seems part of the political and military elite was very interested in improving German influence and colonising new territories. This group wanted to counteract the dominance of the British empire by having a powerful naval fleet that would, not only colonise new territories, but also defend German merchant ships. Tirpitz was commissioned to persuade the vast majority of the politicians, including the Kaiser, and German population, through *publicity* instruments such as posters, conferences, speeches and feature stories in the press. Despite its "controversial and manipulative essence", the activities he displayed locally were mainly informative. Cfr. KUNCZIK, M., *Geschichte der Öffentlichkeitsarbeit in Deutschland*, Böhlau, Köln, 1997, pp. 111-116; BENTELE, Günter, WEHMEIER, Stefan, "From Literary Bureaus to a Modern Profession: The Development and Current Structure of Public Relations in Germany", in SRIRAMESH, Krishnamurthy, VERČIČ, Dejan (edit.), *op. cit.*, 2003, pp. 201-202.

⁸⁴ The reason why Krupp became the best PR counsel for his firm might be explained by a sentence he wrote in 1866: "I think the time has come for trustworthy people to write and publish company reports in the newspapers that could be read all over the world and spread some knowledge about those companies", BINDER, Elisabeth, *op. cit.*, p. 170.

⁸⁵ Cfr. HEIN, Stephanie, *Public Relations und Soziale Marktwirtschaft. Eine Geschichte ihrer Abhängigkeiten*, Verlag Reinhard Fischer; Kommunikations-wissenschaftliche Studien, Band 18, München, 1998, p. 74.

to Alfred Lautner⁸⁶. Between 1898 and 1904, other German companies followed the example of Krupps by setting up communication departments or press bureaus, including the biscuit manufacturer Heinrich Bahlsen, AEG, Henkel, Siemens and Bayer⁸⁷. Whatever word or term may have been used to denote such activities or initiatives, the underlying purpose in each case was to open a direct channel of communication between the company and the public. Moreover, at that time, the press regarded the publication of reports on public affairs to be a professional duty.

The concern to use a variety of methods to build bonds with society was not limited only to private companies in the early twentieth century; a number of associations with similar goals also appeared between 1900 and 1920 in a range of areas⁸⁸. *Hansabund* was founded in 1909; its mission was to argue against the economic predominance of the agriculture sector and highlight the advantages of industrial enterprises. The following year, Adolf von Harnack set out to promote science, thus facilitating the establishment of the *Kaiser Wilhelm Gesellschaft* (KWG – Kaiser William Society) in 1911. Due to World War I, the *Kriegspresseamt* (the war office press service) was set up on 10 October 1915; its role was to enforce censorship. After the end of World War I, the *Reichsamtes für die Presse und Propagandatätigkeit* (a press and propaganda service for the Reich) was established; this was replaced in 1919 by the *Vereinigten Pressebüro des Reichskanzlers und des Auswärtigen Amtes* (joint press offices for the Reich Chancellery and the foreign affairs service), which brought together press (previously, propaganda) offices and overseas information services. Over the fourteen-year lifespan of the Weimar Republic, the *Vereinigten Pressebüro* had eight different directors. Two other noteworthy associations were set up in the 1920s: the first was established to act as an intermediary between the rail service and the general public, and the second to foster positive social attitudes regarding the need for research⁸⁹. In the mid-1920s, I.G. Farben inaugurated a press department led by Hans

⁸⁶ Cfr. FLIEGER, Hans, "Success and a certain failure. PR education and research in German speaking countries", *International Public Relations Association Review*, vol. 8, n° 3, 1984, p. 9.

⁸⁷ Cfr. FISCHER, Heinz-Dietrich, WAHL, Ulrike G. (edit.), *Public Relations. Geschichte, Grundlagen, Grenzziehungen*, Verlag Peter Lang, Frankfurt am Marin, 1993, pp. 17-18; HEIN, Stephanie, *op. cit.*, p. 74; BINDER, E., *op. cit.*, pp. 73-78.

⁸⁸ Cfr. OECKL, Albert, "Anfänge und Entwicklung de Öffentlichkeitsarbeit", in FISCHER, Heinz-dietrich, WAHL, Ulrike G. (edit.), *op. cit.*, pp. 22-25.

⁸⁹ Cfr. *Ibid.*; SZYSZKA, Peter, *op. cit.*, pp. 325-326.

Brettner, who strove to create an atmosphere of consumer confidence and public understanding without ever having heard the term “public relations”⁹⁰.

These PR precedents suggest that many companies and associations sought to build and maintain relationships with German society. Unfortunately, however, their endeavors were not pooled in such a way as to professionalize the activity, as had occurred in the US in the 1920s. A radical form of censorship was (re)imposed on 30 October 1938 with the rise of the Third Reich. As head of the Ministry of Information and Propaganda, Josef Goebbels took total control of the occasions, spaces and modes in which communication could take place; and the overriding criteria in this regard was the spread of Nazi ideology. Although the sociopolitical climate was far from favorable, a few ‘oases’ did spring up in this apparent desert of PR inactivity. In 1935, I.G. Farben centralized its press department in Berlin, under the direction of Mario Passarge, a journalist⁹¹; a second instance was Carl Hundhausen’s 1937 publication which used the expression “public relations” for the first time in Germany, although the text did not have a major public impact⁹².

In fact, the relative delay in the introduction of PR in Germany, despite precedents that mirror US developments in type and timeframe, was due to the National-Socialist regime, which stripped the system of economic, political and social freedoms⁹³. According to some researchers, there was no need for German companies to engage in advertising or PR during the Third

⁹⁰ Cfr. OECKL, Albert, “Die historische Entwicklung der Public Relations in Deutschland”, in KALT, Gero (edit.), *Öffentlichkeitsarbeit und Werbung: Instrumente, Strategien, Perspektiven*, Institut für Medienentwicklung und Kommunikation, Frankfurt am Main, 1990, p. 13.

⁹¹ OECKL, Albert, *Handbuch der Public Relations. Theorie und Praxis der Öffentlichkeitsarbeit in Deutschland und der Welt*, Süddeutscher Verlag, München, 1964, p. 94. Passarge promoted the edition of some in-house publications such as “Von Werk zu Werk” [“From Werk to Werk”, where “Werk” can be translated as “work” or “factory”] and “Erzeugnisse unserer Arbeit” [“Experiences about our job”], cfr. *Ibid.*, pp. 95-97.

⁹² Carl Hundhausen had just come back from the United States where he had attended a conference on promotion and communication techniques for banks and financial institutions. He wrote about his impressions in an article for the journal *Deutsche Werbung* (“German Advertising”), which became the first German treaty on the concept of “public relations”. In that article, he defined PR as: “The art of getting a favourable public opinion towards an organisation’s products and services through the use of words either written or spoken, actions or evident symbols”, cfr. HUNDHAUSEN, Carl, “Public Relations. Ein Reklame-kongreß für Werbefachleute der Banken in USA”, *Deutsche Werbung*, Jg. 30, Heft 19, 1937, p. 1054. Twenty years later, he admitted his first article was a total failure and did not have a favourable reception, very likely for being an American term arriving in Germany. Cfr. HUNDHAUSEN, Carl, *Industrielle Publizität als Public Relations*, Verlag W. Girardet, Essen, 1957.

⁹³ Cfr. HEIN, Stephanie, *op. cit.*, pp. 30-31.

Reich. From January 1933 to May 1945, the German State had absolute control of the economy and would not permit any additional private initiatives. Similarly, other scholars hold that this historical period marked a divergence between Germany and the US as regards PR because it prevented meaningful comparison between the two countries, any attempt at which ran the risk of linking PR with propaganda, the emblematic communications strategy of the Nazi regime⁹⁴.

Not until the end of World War II did a theoretical framework for PR in Germany begin to emerge. Hence, unlike the US, where the origins of PR as a profession and as a theory were simultaneous, the early PR activities in Germany were practiced before a theoretical background had been established. The lack of a theoretical context prompted a reliance on US-centered bibliography in the immediate post-war years, because it was the only research literature then in existence. Thus, German precedents in the field were forgotten and, moreover, the theoretical criteria that were adopted failed to encompass the contextual specificity of the country. The borrowing of a term (“public relations”), the novelty of whose meaning was only superficial, eclipsed the fact that the philosophy inherent in the expression was already being put into practice in Germany, in a more or less organized way, from the previous –that is, nineteenth– century.

The professionalization of PR in Germany began in the late 1940s, following the end of the Allied Occupation, the 1948 monetary reform, and the inauguration of the Federal Republic in 1949. That World War II was an economic and social disaster for Germany, as well as a political and military catastrophe, cannot be overlooked. After Germany’s unconditional surrender on 8 May 1945, the country was governed as central state economy until the approval of the Basic Law of 23 May 1949, which enacted a social market economy. In this regard, therefore, PR as a professional activity is linked to the introduction of a market economy in the country. The new economic model was not immediately welcomed by the general public, so companies with an interest in implementing the new economic system came together to influence public opinion favorably towards a social market economy. The new economic system was based on a twofold line of argument: the fundamental validity of the market economy model (especially as opposed to a command economy), and the limits and limitations of market imperatives, as liberalism

⁹⁴ Cfr. *Ibid.*, p. 76.

had originally asserted⁹⁵. The social market economy defined competition as the structural principle of the economy. The State's new role in the regard was to maintain the conditions required to ensure such competition would be as free as possible. Given these circumstances, that a group of businessmen should come together to plan a campaign in favor of the social market economy is unsurprising.

The goal of the first major PR campaign carried out in Germany was to inform the public about the economic and social problems facing the country at that time⁹⁶. The newly defined economic model was presented with the objective of persuading people of its advantages. Despite the negative results of the past, the general consensus was that a command economic system was the ideal economic model for Germany. In the early 1950s, the Demoscopic Institute Allensbach delivered data on the social climate in the country, which would play a key part in shaping the campaign. The survey results showed that the German people were unhappy with the political and economic development of the country, tired of the established political parties, and frustrated by the privileged position of business-owners with respect to workers. In light of this information, the purpose of the campaign was threefold: to clarify the impact on society of the social market economy; to enhance the public image of businessmen; and to improve the relationship between businessmen and workers. The underlying idea was to foster a sense of equality so as to bring about the much needed and sought-after social peace. Political motives also underlay this first PR campaign, which supported a range of actions undertaken by the CSU (*Christlich Soziale Union*), a party running for election in 1953. Finally, the campaign, referred to as *Die Waage* (the balance), was rolled out by *Waage-Gemeinschaft zur Förderung des Sozialen Ausgleich* (an association calling for social equality), which had been set up by a group of businessmen in September 1952. However, the sources of the funding streams used to finance the association were never fully disclosed⁹⁷.

A range of advertisements were produced with the same slogan, "If everyone makes an effort, the social market economy will lead us to wellbeing",

⁹⁵ Cfr DE LA FUENTE, Juan Marcos, *La Economía Social de Mercado*, Asociación de Estudios Empresariales, Madrid, 1978, p. 24.

⁹⁶ The first advertisement for the campaign was released on October 5th, 1952, and published in 445 different Sunday newspapers and magazines with an estimated audience of 12 million Germans. It was about: "Grassroot persuasion, through information and facts taking the form of charming and rhythmic lessons and explanations". Cfr. HEIN, Stephanie, *op. cit.*, pp. 86-87 and pp. 90-91.

⁹⁷ Cfr. *Ibid.*, pp. 89-90.

containing texts that followed the same line of argument under headings such as “How soon people forget”, “The German miracle”, “We’re all pulling in the same direction”, “The fate of German workers hangs in the balance” and “Ask women”⁹⁸. Other issues were addressed in subsequent years, such as the importance of investment, a planned economy, price fixing, and the construction of housing. The same argumentative structure was used in each case: a description of the economic crisis lambasting post-war Germany, followed by an account of the positive aspects of the social market economy⁹⁹. In an attempt to communicate more effectively with the public, the 1953–1954 advertising campaigns were framed as a series of conversations between two characters, Otto and Fritz, who spoke in eloquent and didactic terms about such topics as “Our strength is wellbeing”, “Will our money retain its value?” or “We need to export more”. The Otto and Fritz conversation series was published in newspapers and screened as commercials in German cinemas. Both the *Die Waage* and Otto and Fritz campaigns continued throughout 1957, an election year, to highlight the success of the outgoing government’s economic policy. In 1960, the general socioeconomic consensus could be summed up in the sentence, “Social Market Economy: the economic model for a free people”¹⁰⁰.

Following this overview of PR precedents and the first PR campaign in Germany to promote the new economic model of a social market economy, the respective contributions of two pioneering figures in the field should also be noted: Carl Hundhausen and Albert Oeckl. The former was keen to spread the practice of PR in Germany; he published widely on PR; his first article, which was published in 1957, included the first use of the term “public relations” in Germany (although, as mentioned above, it had little impact because of the language barrier). In addition to engaging in PR practice, Hundhausen studied business administration and management, which enabled him to set out a theoretical framework for PR; he combined his roles as teacher and theorist with his responsibilities as head of PR at Krupp¹⁰¹. Albert Oeckl was one of

⁹⁸ Cfr. *Ibid.*, pp. 90-91.

⁹⁹ Cfr. *Ibid.*, p. 91.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 91-92.

¹⁰¹ “Hundhausen did not consider PR a handicraft activity. He went a little bit further. He considered PR as a way of communicating that should be carefully planned and managed, and that should come up with new solutions to different problems every single time”, cfr. FLIEGER, Hans; RONNEBERGER, Franz (edit.), *Public Relations. Anfänge in Deutschland. Festschrift zum 100. Geburtstag von Carl Hundhausen*, Verlag für deutsche Wirtschaftsbiographien, Studien zu Theorie und Praxis der Public Relations: Band 23, Wiesbaden, 1993, p. 21.

the first researchers to publish academic, theoretical texts on PR in Germany. From 1950 to 1959, he was manager of the German Industry Association and responsible for its PR activity; later, he combined his work as head of the department of *Öffentlichkeitsarbeit* at BASF with the post of professor at the University of Heidelberg¹⁰².

As a theorist, Oeckl is the author of two classic texts in the field of PR in Germany: *Handbuch der Public Relations* –A PR Handbook– (1964) and *Public Relations Praxis* (1976). These books have provided scholars and practitioners with a firm basis on which to work, and have become reference texts in the field of PR in Germany. Oeckl's theory presupposes the existence of a mass society, as Edward Bernays had argued; and depicts communication as a means of constructing social unity. Thus, the primary objective of PR is to improve the information communicated to society and, as a result, help enhance the democratic system insofar as it contributes to establishing a sociopolitical consensus¹⁰³. Oeckl summarized his vision of PR in the following, intriguing formula:

$$\text{Öffentlichkeitsarbeit} = \text{Information} + \text{Anpassung (Adaptation)} + \text{Integration}^{104}$$

This well-known formula underscores the notion that *Öffentlichkeitsarbeit* (work on public opinion, thus a synonym for PR in this context) involves the existence of information in conjunction with a commitment to adaptation and integration. To Oeckl's mind, the purpose of PR is nothing other than to improve information within society; and information should have certain characteristics (internal and external, transparent and prompt), and be both well-founded and presented at the proper time and in the right place. As regards adaptation, its function in this regard is to assess and balance public opinion and potential client interests. Finally, such adaptation presupposes that every effort should be made to integrate client interests with the public good. Ten years later, Oeckl revised his definition of PR to encompass the concept of harmony¹⁰⁵.

Carl Hundhausen and Albert Oeckl unquestionably feature as leading lights in any discussion of the history of PR in Germany. As pioneering figures

¹⁰² Cfr. HEIN, Stephanie, *op. cit.*, pp. 28-29.

¹⁰³ Cfr. *Ibid.*, p. 100.

¹⁰⁴ Cfr. OECKL, A., *op. cit.*

¹⁰⁵ HEIN, Stephanie, *op. cit.*, p. 15 y p. 100.

in the field, they worked to raise the standard of PR activity in Germany, not only in theoretical and practical terms, but also as regards professional status. Both were members of professional associations –in particular, the *Deutsche Public Relations Gesellschaft* (DPRG: the German Public Relations Society), founded on 8 December 1958. As a veteran theorist and professional, Carl Hundhausen held the presidency of the DPRG until the middle of 1960; Albert Oeckl was president from 1961 to 1967¹⁰⁶. The new association fostered the development of PR in Germany, and facilitated professional networking between PR practitioners. The founding of the DPRG meant that there was finally a representative body for the profession in Germany, as well as ensuring that the activity was clearly distinguished from advertising and journalism. The DPRG soon began to offer professional training courses, the only educational option of that kind available in Germany until the 1980s¹⁰⁷.

In short, the socio-historical circumstances and needs in Germany during the post-war period favored the expansion and systematization of PR. The reconstruction of industry and the implementation of a new economic model fostered the development of PR, which had been practiced in the country (under different headings and names) since the nineteenth century. To set 1958 (the year the DPRG was founded) as the starting-point for an account of PR in Germany would yield an unnecessarily limited historical narrative. To limit the history of PR in Germany to its modern forms would reduce the practice of PR in Germany to a more US-centered model of such activity, an approach which aimed to adapt concepts and techniques to the German context.

However, a detailed analysis of the factors that conditioned the development of PR discloses that such conditions were different in Germany than in the US¹⁰⁸. First, the emergence of PR in 1950s Germany was linked to a perceived information deficit, prompted by public indifference to economic issues.

¹⁰⁶ Oeckl's promotional activities for PR took place not only in Germany, but also in Europe. He was a member of the *International Public Relations Association* (IPRA) since 1961, its president from 1965 to 1967 and finally he held important positions within different IPRA's committees. In fact, IPRA trusted him to write its second *Gold Paper* about the state of the art of PR education worldwide. Cfr. INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC RELATIONS ASSOCIATION, *General Report on Public Relations Education Worldwide*, Gold Paper n° 2, 1976.

¹⁰⁷ KÄMPGEN, Verena, "Germany", *PR Landscapes*, Global Alliance for Public Relations, 2007, p. 8, available at: <http://www.globalalliancepr.org/website/sites/default/files/globalalliance/pr-landscape-germany.pdf>; HINES, Randy, "German public relations", *PRism*, vol. 6 (2), 2009, p. 2, available at: <http://www.prismjournal.org/fileadmin/Praxis/Files/globalPR/HINES.pdf>

¹⁰⁸ Cfr. BINDER, Elisabeth, *op. cit.*, pp. 143-153.

Companies such as AEG, Daimler-Benz and Krupp set up PR departments to correct this deficit and, above all, to lay the groundwork for the social market economy¹⁰⁹. In the US, the establishment of communications departments and the appointment of information consultants were prompted by the impact of sensationalist investigative reporting which revealed scandals involving large companies. In other words, the American public was not indifferent to business and economic affairs: in fact, the American public 'obliged' businessmen to keep people informed about their activities. The second developmental factor in German PR, related to the first, concerned the perception of PR and involved an attempt to improve the relationship between businessmen and the general public, whose view of economic affairs tended to be neutral (and occasionally skeptical). The ultimate reason underlying the move to improve these interrelationships in Germany was not bound up with ethical qualms about business activities, as had been the case in the US; rather, German businessmen were committed to preventing the appearance of an adverse social climate in the future, so as to ensure the rehabilitation of the atrophied, post-1945 German economy. Finally, the third factor favoring the progress of PR was reflected in the business community's endeavors to establish a market economy, which led to the first and most extensive PR campaign in Germany during the first stage of the profession's modern development, until the status of the sector was consolidated from 1958 onwards.

In conclusion, it may be said that any history of PR must account for the rise of modern industrial society, which presupposes the existence of a scientific, technical civilization that facilitates differentiation and specialization in all day-to-day activities¹¹⁰. Moreover, PR in the business sector is driven by the efforts of businessmen to forge relationships with the general public. A number of PR-type precedents, albeit referred to under different headings and names, whose use was not exclusive to the US, have been outlined here. Not until the 1950s did the process of professionalization begin to have a real impact on PR in Germany, when PR practitioners began to correlate established and practiced techniques in Germany with the only available, complementary bibliographical resources in the field, which were American.

¹⁰⁹ Krupp (a well known steel company) established a press bureau to send news in 1893. Later in 1925, an independent advertising bureau. Both offices joined between 1944 and 1954 and finally, in 1958, the advertising department became independent again. The office activities ranged from coordinating visits to organising employees trips, exhibitions, conferences or designing educational material, videos, international advertisements to name a few. *Ibid.*, pp. 168-180.

¹¹⁰ Cfr. HEIN, Stephanie, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

The only findings and conclusions available to German scholars at that time were in US-produced research literature. To a certain extent, PR in Germany was held back by the perception that “public relations” was an American invention. The lack of a concerted German research program in this regard meant that this attitude remained unchanged until the 1980s. Slight and isolated references to German PR precedents were regarded as accidents or errors that occurred at given historical moments. For a number of researchers, to overlook such precedents is not only an act of negligence, but to strip such phenomena of their true value. To set the historical clock to zero in 1945 avoids the difficult and controversial task of addressing the connection between National-Socialism and PR and, as a result, between PR and the propaganda strategies of totalitarian regimes¹¹¹.

3.5. Spain

The term “public relations” was adopted in Spain at the height of the Franco dictatorship (1939–1975)¹¹². Despite the eclipse of democracy and freedom of information throughout that period, PR was established in the country through its successful contribution to the implementation of a limited market economy designed to resolve the problems facing the Spanish economic system through the stability plans undertaken in the late 1950s¹¹³.

¹¹¹ Cfr. BINDER, Elisabeth, *op. cit.*, pp. 239-240.

¹¹² Cfr. GUTIÉRREZ GARCÍA, Elena, RODRÍGUEZ SALCEDO, Natalia, “50 años de Relaciones Públicas en España. De la propaganda y la publicidad, a la gestión de la reputación”, *Doxa Comunicación*, noviembre 2009, n° 9, pp. 13-33.

¹¹³ For further information about the development of Spanish PR after de 1950's, please see the following 21st-century references: cfr. MONTERO DÍAZ, Mercedes, DEL RÍO PÉREZ, Jorge, RODRÍGUEZ SALCEDO, Natalia and others, *La edad de oro de la Comunicación Comercial. Historia de la Publicidad y las Relaciones Públicas en España (1960-2000)*, Comunicación Social Ediciones y Publicaciones, Sevilla/Zamora, 2010; ARCEO VACAS, Alfredo, “Public Relations in Spain: an introduction”, *Public Relations Review*, vol. 30, n° 3, 2004, pp. 293-302; ARCEO VACAS, Alfredo, “Public Relations in Spain in 2002: Antecedents, present situation and future tendencies”, *European Public Relations News*, vol. 1, n° 3, 2002, pp. 46-58; ARCEO VACAS, Alfredo, “Principales acontecimientos en la evolución de las relaciones públicas en España”, in ARCEO VACAS, José Luis (coord.), *Las relaciones públicas en España*, McGraw Hill, Madrid, 2004, pp. 51-56; CHECA, Antonio, “Historia de las RRPP”, in Checa, Antonio, *Historia de la Publicidad*, Netbiblo, La Coruña, 2007, pp. 209-220; MORENO, María Ángeles, “Spain”, in RULER, Betteke van, VERÇIC, Dejan (eds.), *Public Relations and Communication Management in Europe. A Nation-by-Nation Introduction to Public Relations Theory and Practice*, Mouton de Gruyter, Berlin, 2004, pp. 393-412; NOGUERO I GRAU, Antonio, “Principa-

Very little research has been carried out in relation to PR precedents in Spain¹¹⁴. The term “public relations” was not used until the 1950s – first in a theoretical sense, and only later still in practice. Thus, the first “public relations” campaigns, explicitly referred to as such, were not launched until 1958. However, this does not mean that no PR activity was initiated before that time¹¹⁵.

From the emergence of advertising activity at the turn of the twentieth century, some advertisers such as Nestlé (makers of powdered baby milk formula for newborns) had sought to build bonds with various groups of stakeholders, including parents and pediatricians. In the years prior to the Spanish Civil War, public bodies such as Barcelona City Council (in 1929) launched information campaigns using posters, whose goal was to reduce the number of victims of tram-related accidents. The advertising campaign that may be regarded as the precursor of PR in Spain was run for *Perfumerías Gal* by the advertising agency Pedro Prat Gaballí between 1931 and 1933. *Perfumerías Gal* hired the pioneering agency to promote its toothpaste, Dens. Following a detailed market analysis, Prat informed the company that the first problem they faced was a lack of oral hygiene habits, especially in rural areas. Hence, the campaign was designed under the heading of “educational advertising”, to encourage the development of oral hygiene habits among children living outside major cities.

Commercial advertising all but disappeared during the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939); information campaigns concerning road safety or hygiene methods were not to reappear until many years after war had ended, well into the Franco dictatorship. One such instance in the newly-established political

les acontecimientos en la evolución de las relaciones públicas en España”, in ARCEO, José Luis (coord.), *Las relaciones públicas en España*, McGraw-Hill, Madrid, 2004, pp. 337-359; NOGUERO I GRAU, Antonio, *Función Social de las Relaciones Públicas: Historia, Teoría y Marco Legal*, Escuela Superior de Relaciones Públicas, Barcelona, 1995; NOGUERO I GRAU, Antonio, “La historia de las relaciones públicas en España: 1954-1990”, *Revista Universitaria de Publicidad y Relaciones Públicas*, n° 1 (2ª época), Máster en Comunicación Corporativa y Publicitaria, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 1994, pp. 67-90.

¹¹⁴ Cfr. RODRÍGUEZ SALCEDO, Natalia, “Public Relations before ‘public relations’ in Spain. An early history (1881-1969)”, *Journal of Communication Management*, History of Public Relations Special Edition, vol. 12, n° 4, 2008, pp. 279-293; MONTERO DÍAZ, Mercedes, RODRÍGUEZ SALCEDO, Natalia & VERDERA, Francisco, *De la nada al consumo. Historia de la Publicidad y las Relaciones Públicas en España. Desde los orígenes hasta 1960*, Comunicación Social Ediciones y Publicaciones, Sevilla/Zamora, 2010.

¹¹⁵ Cfr. RODRÍGUEZ SALCEDO, Natalia, “Public Relations before ‘public relations’...”, *op. cit.*

climate was campaign to reduce the high infant mortality rate in Spain promoted by the “Propaganda Section” of the General Inspectorate for Health, which was dependent on the Ministry of Government at that time.

Apart from the specific cases cited above, the term “public relations” as such was not used in Spain until 1953, when Prat Gaballí used the expression in the first edition of his book, *Publicidad combativa* (“Combative advertising”); the term was based on a free translation of the term “general relations” and defined as an activity already in operation¹¹⁶:

to make use of all sorts of situations prompted by personal relationships, transforming them into ways of fostering a sense of friendship and trust, as well as the prestige of the company and its products.

However, the term “public relations” did not become part and parcel of everyday practice in the sector until several years later. Joaquín Maestre Morata, who was working for the Danis advertising agency at the time, appears to have been the first to use the expression “public relations campaign”, rather than the conventional term that had been used at the company since 1956: “prestige advertising”, a type of campaign that was regarded as targeting improvements in the social situation of the time, not as a means of promoting the consumption of a given product. Campaigns of this kind were run for client companies such as *Lejía Guerrero* and *Lavavajillas Mistol*, *Transportes Ochoa* and *Rocalla*, among others. Maestre and Lucien Matrat ran into one another by accident at a hotel reception in Brussels, where the former was attending a congress about advertising. Lucien Matrat, a leading practitioner and theorist of PR in Europe, provided Maestre with an outline of what PR were; and Maestre realized that PR had been practiced in Spain under different names or headings, including “prestige advertising”.

On his return to Spain, Joaquín Maestre was able to forecast a bright future for PR and he founded the first Spanish PR firm, in partnership with his friend Juan Viñas, a radio journalist. S.A.E. PR –*Sociedad Anónima Española de Relaciones Públicas*– agency opened for business in Barcelona in the autumn of 1960. Capital investment for the company was supplied by the Fontcuberta brothers, owners of the Danis advertising agency, where Maestre had previously been employed.

A number of endeavors to set up professional associations were undertaken during the 1960s. The first professional PR association was founded in Barce-

¹¹⁶ PRAT GABALLÍ, Pedro, *Publicidad combativa*, Editorial Labor, Barcelona, 1953, p. 194.

lona in 1961: *Asociación Técnica de Relaciones Públicas* (ATRP: the Technical Association of Public Relations). The ATRP was replaced in 1965 by *Agrupación Española de Relaciones Públicas* (AERP: the Spanish Association of Public Relations), likewise based in Barcelona. The *Centro Español de Relaciones Públicas* (CERP: the Spanish Center of Public Relations) was established in Madrid at the same time. The two associations merged in 1966 to join forces in organizing the annual meeting of the IPRA. However, ongoing tensions as regards the structure and organization of the event between the Madrid and Barcelona contingents led to a crisis within the new group, which split back into two separate associations within a year¹¹⁷.

Spanish PR agencies began to look for institutional status and recognition during the 1970s. The first National Assembly on PR took place in 1969, and was wholly devoted to the issue of legal recognition for the sector in Spain during the late-Franco period. A Decree recognizing Schools of Information Sciences was finally issued in 1971, which included a reference to licentiate degrees in PR (although it was not implemented in practice until 1994); and the Official Register of PR Specialists, detailing the conditions a PR expert as such were required to meet, came into operation in 1974 and disappeared with the death of Franco.

PR began to develop further following the death of Franco in 1975, the gradual introduction of democracy, the liberalization of the communications media and greater openness to other countries and cultures; this development progressed rapidly through two major international events: the World Expo in Seville and the Olympic Games in Barcelona, both held in 1992.

4. Conclusions

As discussed in the introduction above, the purpose of this article was twofold: first, to explore whether a common European trend may be discerned in the history of PR; and second, to identify the general historical conditions from which PR practices in Europe may have stemmed.

In light of the various historical overviews provided in the preceding section, the emergence of PR in Europe does not appear to have followed a common pattern. This diversity is even reflected in the different ways in which

¹¹⁷ These ongoing tensions are reflected in personal letters and other documents from these years. Cfr. Mr. Joaquín Maestre's professional papers, available for research at the Archive of the University of Navarra.

the US term “public relations” was adopted in the five countries addressed here. Although the term began to be used in the different countries during the same time period, its specific usage is conditioned by different political and economic contexts (the term was first used in Spain several years later than in the other four cases). Moreover, if the term “public relations” is set aside, and the focus shifted to professional precedents in the field of PR, the differences between the US and Europe become even more striking.

In general, an early interest in establishing some form of professional association was evident in all five European countries (UK: 1948; France: 1949-1955; Italy: 1952-1954; Germany: 1958; Spain: 1961-1965); the first move to set up a national professional association in the US, where the term “public relations” was coined, came in 1948 (the Public Relations Society of America) –that is, the same year the expression was introduced in Europe. Hence, it would seem as though the UK was the first country to adopt the term fully, during the interwar period, whereas the other countries did so in the years following the end of World War I.

During the gradual progress of PR towards institutionalization as a profession, and following the establishment of the first professional associations, the histories of the various countries evince significant differences in relation to the production of a specialized research bibliography and curriculum-design for the first PR training courses. An endeavor to provide a theoretical framework for the emerging profession was undertaken only in the UK and Germany. The first PR training courses were developed by the first professional associations, although their curricula were not benchmarked to higher-education or university standards until the 1960s and 1970s in Germany, the 1980s in the UK, and the 1990s in Italy and Spain. The situation in France was exceptional in this regard; by means of a ministerial decree in 1964, not only did the French government officially recognize PR as a profession, it also distinguished PR from other activities such as journalism and advertising.

In short, therefore, given that the different countries evince different features as regards the development of PR as a profession, there would not appear to be a common thread or pattern underlying the so-called “European history of PR”. The expression might be better understood as denoting the endeavor to (re)compose the historical narratives of PR in Europe in line with the specific sociocultural circumstances conditioning each country, which have a real and significant impact on the evolution of PR. On the basis of this argument, and since the origins of PR in European countries yield a variety of histories, the question of to what extent current, global PR techniques may be implemented in the same way in different places may be relevant.

The specific historical studies produced in the various European countries also imply that, in addition to the Anglo-American influence, a reading of the development of PR must also encompass a range of factors including the role of democracy, the openness of a given society¹¹⁸, and the market forces and competition at work in a particular economy. The term “public relations” was borrowed into use in Europe from the United States. However, in-depth historical accounts, like those produced in Germany, conclude that PR practices had emerged in Europe before their ‘importation’ from the US, albeit under different headings or names.

Hence, the European history of PR may be said to belong to the general history of Europe. Although the term “public relations” was borrowed from the US in an economic climate of growth and progress, the national contexts of European countries played a determining role in the emergence and early development of the profession in Europe. The ways in which the history of each country and the history of PR there overlap or parallel one another at different times have been noted in the accounts given above. Thus, it may be concluded that PR practices are conditioned primarily by the circumstances in the country where they are applied, rather than by established theories. A comprehensive history of PR as such, therefore, must encompass the national histories of PR in each country. In light of the arguments and discussion outlined above, the view below, as expressed by Chaumely and Huisman, must be unequivocally rejected¹¹⁹:

PR has completed a stage: a past whose only point of interest is practical. Only the present matters now: the gradual spread of public relations. While history is subsumed by geography, its mythology is turning into grammar.

However, as they go on to note at the end of the paragraph, the goal is to uncover the real historical events and conditions involved and to interpret them so as to establish a reliable frame of reference within which to study and understand the development of PR.

¹¹⁸ Cfr. WISSE, Hubert & SCHOEVEERS, Lex, “Cultivating networks: aspects of international communication”, Gold Paper n° 13, I.P.R.A., chapter 3, October 2000.

¹¹⁹ Cfr. CHAUMELY, Jean, HUISMAN, Denis, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

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